

## Victor K. Prest, First Recipient of the W. A. Johnston Medal

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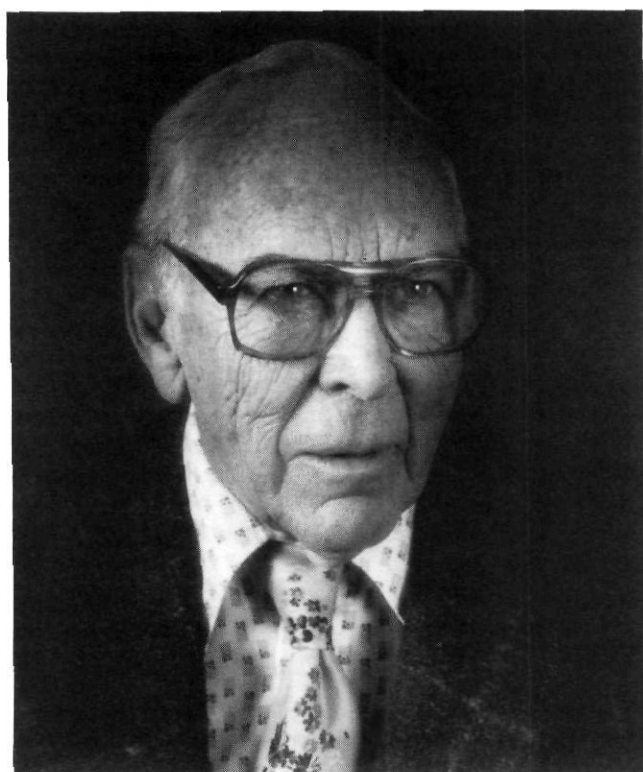
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# VICTOR K. PREST, FIRST RECIPIENT OF THE W. A. JOHNSTON MEDAL

## THE W. A. JOHNSTON MEDAL

The W. A. Johnston Medal is the highest award of the Canadian Quaternary Association, and is given for professional excellence in Quaternary research. Nominations can be made on behalf of anyone with a demonstrated publication record who has contributed to Quaternary research in Canada or abroad. The nominator must be a member of the Canadian Quaternary Association and a nominee may be a researcher residing anywhere in the world.



The Johnston Medal was named after William Albert Johnston, born in 1874 in the village of Aberarder, near Sarnia, Ontario. He obtained his degrees at Queen's University (B.A., 1903; B.Sc., 1905) and joined the Geological Survey of Canada after graduation. The period 1913-1915 was spent in post-graduate studies at Yale, and he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1922.

Johnston's research investigations were concentrated on the Quaternary, and his investigations helped elucidate the former limits of the eastern glacial Great Lakes, as well as the historical drainage routes through the North Bay, Trent and Sarnia outlets. His examinations of the surficial geology of the Ottawa-Georgian Bay region revealed the extent of isostatic uplift in the area and more accurately defined the western limits of the Champlain Sea transgression in the Ottawa Valley.

In central Canada, Johnston spent many years investigating the areal limits of glacial Lake Agassiz; he helped to establish suitable water supplies for Regina and Moose Jaw, and he was one of the foremost authorities on placer gold deposits in Canada. He was responsible for extensive studies of the Fraser River and its delta, and was instrumental in helping to improve navigation in the area.

Johnston was a prolific writer with over sixty reports, memoirs and papers covering an extraordinary variety of topics. These range from the history of Niagara Falls and the development of the Great Lakes, to sea level changes and the migration of man into North America. In 1939 he retired from the Geological Survey and lived at the Bay of Quinte until his death in 1949.\*

## CITATION FOR THE 1987 AWARD OF THE W. A. JOHNSTON MEDAL

Dr. Victor K. Prest was born in Edmonton, Alberta, and attended school in Edmonton, Toronto, London, Ontario and Winnipeg. He obtained two degrees from the University of Manitoba, in 1935 an Honours B.Sc. in geology and botany, and in 1936 an M.Sc. for which he was awarded the Kennedy Prize in geology. The University of Toronto awarded him a Ph.D. in geology, mineralogy and chemistry in 1941, and he served on the Senate of the University from 1946 to 1952.

His early training in field geology was as an assistant in field parties with the Manitoba Mines Branch, the Geological Survey of Canada, the Ontario Department of Mines, and the International Nickel Company of Canada. During the war he

\* Abstracted from an obituary by H. C. Cooke in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada

served with the Royal Canadian Navy, first as a sublieutenant and then lieutenant. After the war he joined the Ontario Department of Mines where he worked as a field geologist in northern Ontario and as acting geophysicist for many years. Finally in 1950 he heeded a call to join the Geological Survey of Canada where he would play a pivotal role in structuring Quaternary research in this country. He was put in charge of the Pleistocene, Engineering and Groundwater Unit which later became a Section. It is at this time that he began leading a team that would become the core unit of Quaternary studies in Canada.

In building the Quaternary geology unit and in the following 30 years with the Geological Survey, Dr. Prest was instrumental in providing opportunities for a large number of professionals and graduate students to carry out fieldwork and to gather the necessary data and experience to write theses, both at the Masters and Ph.D. levels. There is no doubt that his leadership in this field has affected the lives of large numbers of Quaternary geoscientists in Canada.

His extensive publications (see bibliography below), in both bedrock and surficial geology, are an eloquent testimony to the productivity of this hardworking scientist. Outstanding among these, however, are his major syntheses which have been widely referred to, not only in Canada but also abroad. His major chapters in what was originally called the *Geology and Economic Minerals of Canada Series* became benchmark papers reflecting the status of Quaternary studies in this country. However, he is probably best known for his major synthesis map on the Quaternary of Canada published in 1968 as the *Glacial Map of Canada*; Geological Survey Map 1253A. This map and the accompanying sheet on the retreat of Wisconsin and Recent Ice in North America (Geological Survey Map 1257A) are known around the world and have been used repeatedly by other countries as models of this type of synthesis. For this alone he deserves the major honour we are proposing here. However, a detailed review of his publications will indicate that there are many other reasons why Dr. V. K. Prest should be singled out to be honoured by CANQUA during the Congress of the XII International Union of Quaternary Sciences. We are in a position to show off the Quaternary geology of Canada during the INQUA Congress in large part through his early work, his leadership in Quaternary geology within the Geological Survey of Canada and throughout Canada, and through his major syntheses, which have prodded people to dig more deeply in order to better understand the Quaternary history of our large country.

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On accepting the CANQUA award of the W. A. Johnston Medal and the framed citation from acting CANQUA President W. C. Mahaney, Dr. Prest expressed his heartfelt thanks to all those who had supported his nomination, and especially to Dr. D. A. St-Onge and Mr. E. V. Sado. He then recounted that W. A. Johnston was a pioneer Pleistocene geologist of the Geological Survey of Canada, and a colleague of Ernst Antevs. Dr. Johnston had produced several outstanding reports on Pleistocene matters. Among these were his memoirs and bulletins on the Fraser River Delta in the west, on glacial Lake Agassiz in central Canada, on the Rainy River District of Ontario, and on the Pleistocene and recent deposits of the Ottawa area. These were published between the years 1915 and 1946.

Dr. Prest also stated that though he had never met Dr. Johnston, he was the proud possessor of Johnston's autographed copy of the 1907 edition of the Chamberlin and Salisbury textbook on "Geology, Earth History". This book is thus more highly prized than ever in view of receiving the Johnston award. He then thanked all those present for their warm reception on hearing of this award on the occasion of the XII INQUA banquet.

Compiled by, Alan V. Morgan  
President of CANQUA

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